

Viaje Al Oeste. Journey to  
the West. Die Reise nach  
Westen. Putování na  
západ. Le Voyage en  
Occident. Jornada ao  
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Somewhere, in the province of Sichuan, not very far from Chengdu, we have lunch in a little fish restaurant. There, I met a cute puppy that was very fond of spicy fish.

En un lugar de la provincia de Sichuan, no muy lejos de Chengdu, paramos a almorzar en un pequeño restaurante de pescado. Allí conocí a un precioso cachorrito de perro al que le encantaba el pescado picante.

Time has passed since then so you are not a puppy anymore. We may not meet again but I want you to know that this book is for you. In my mind you shall remain a cute little puppy forever.

Ha pasado algún tiempo desde entonces, así que ya no eres un cachorrito. Puede que no nos encontremos de nuevo, pero quiero que sepas que este libro es para ti. En mi mente siempre serás un pequeño cachorrito precioso.



The first time I traveled to China, once I got off the plane I was thrown into a van and we started traveling westbound non-stop. Almost everyday we made several hundreds of miles. With the camera in my hand just about all the time, I shoot more than 500 photos from the fast-moving van, from hotel rooms up in the air in the forty-something floor of a sky-scraper and from my hip, without stopping to take a second look, because someone was always in a hurry to get somewhere. When I was 12 years old, I started to pay daily visits to the Chinese Fiction section in the Central Library of the town where I lived by then. The book that caught my attention the most was titled Journey To The West. It was a classic sixteenth century text widely popular inside and outside of China. I had that book in my hands at least a hundred times but I never read it. Somehow, at that tender age, I was intimidated by books of that length (it was 2200 pages long). I've already said that the first time I went to China I was traveling westbound non stop. The country that I found, like many emerging countries, was traveling westbound too (If that turns out to be a good thing for Chinese people remains to be seen. There are still lots of suffering people in China and it's quite evident that the country needs serious changes but I'm not sure that "*going west*" is the answer. But then again, politicians rarely look after the people they are supposed to represent). Anyway, I decided to borrow the title of that book that many years before, I had in my hands without daring to read it. Now, you, my dear reader, have before your eyes the first volume of my Journey To The West, focused on rural China. I hope that you do dare to read it. It won't take you much effort. As it happens, it's only a bunch of photos.

La primera vez que viajé a China, nada más poner un pie en tierra, me subieron a una furgoneta y comenzamos a avanzar sin parar hacia el oeste. Casi todos los días, recorríamos varios centenares de kilómetros. Con la cámara en la mano prácticamente de continuo, disparé más de 500 fotos desde la furgoneta en movimiento, desde alguna habitación de hotel en la planta cuarenta y tantos de un rescacielos, y desde la cintura, casi sin mirar, porque siempre había alguien con prisa por llegar a algún sitio. Cuando tenía unos doce años empecé a visitar a diario la sección de Literatura China en la Biblioteca Central de la ciudad donde vivía por entonces. Uno de los libros que más me llamaba la atención se titulaba Viaje Al Oeste. Es un texto clásico del siglo XVI tremendamente popular dentro y fuera de China. Lo tuve en mis manos un centenar de veces, pero nunca lo llegué a leer porque a aquella tierna edad, el volumen del libro (unas 2200 páginas) me resultaba demasiado intimidante. Ya he dicho que cuando aterricé en China por primera vez estuve viajando hacia el Oeste desde que puse el primer pie en tierra. El país que me encontré, como tantos otros en su momento de emergencia, estaba viajando también hacia el Oeste. Queda por ver si esto traerá a la larga algo positivo para el pueblo chino. A día de hoy, la miseria todavía campa a sus anchas por amplias zonas del país. Es evidente que China necesita serios cambios estructurales pero no estoy seguro de que "*viajar al oeste*" sea la respuesta. Claro que la clase política rara vez vela por los intereses del pueblo que supuestamente representa. De cualquier manera, decidí tomar prestado el título de aquel libro que tantos años atrás sostuve en mi manos sin atreverme a leerlo. Ahora tú, querido lector, tienes ante ti el primer volumen de mi Viaje Al Oeste, dedicado a la China rural. Espero que tú sí te atrevas a leerlo. No te costará demasiado esfuerzo. A fin de cuentas, no son más que unas cuantas fotos.































**How much does this people earn a month?**

**Well, in a good company a factory worker without a degree would make 200 dollars.**

**A month?**

**Yeah.**

**Is that enough to support a family?**

**Hardly. But they manage somehow. Listen, you gotta hear this. You know Wong, don't you?**

**That engineer who works at your company, the one who's obsessed with trekking?**

**Yeah, that's good old Wong. Well, you see, some weeks ago, he took me to the village where he used to live when he was a child. He showed me a tattered building that I wouldn't dare to call a house and he said that he lived there till he was eight years old and he wasn't bullshitting me. Man, I know farm pigs that live in far better places than that. No kidding. Now he makes more money than most people in Europe. His parents and his grandparents and his great grandparents worked their asses off and had shitty lives so he could have a superior education. We are in the 21st century but that thing is still happening. People literally working for the future. Sacrificing entire lives for the sake of a generation yet to come.**

**I don't know what to say. I feel for them but at the same time I'm scared shitless.**

**You should be, man, you should be.**















































**If we stop in one of these little towns do you think I could find a bookshop?**

**Mmm, not likely.**

**And further down the road?**

**In an hour or so all you are going to see are mountains and more mountains.**

**So, no bookshops, uh?**

**When we get back to Chengdu you can buy all the books you want. What exactly are you looking for?**

**A friend of mine, back in Spain, is interested in Chinese philosophy. So, if I find some old Chinese editions of the classic texts, you know, I Ching, Tao Te Ching, Chuang Tze, I would like to buy them for him.**

**He's into Taoism I see.**

**A lot of people in Europe are into Chinese schools of thought.**

**You know, I've always found that ridiculous. I mean what do you, western people, see in those books? Do you understand a single word? No offense, but I don't think you do. Seriously, what are they trying to find in them?**

**They're probably lost, you know. I got lost once too.**

**Did you find your way back?**

**No. I'm still lost. I'll probably be lost till the day I die.**



























# 西遊記(1)

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